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ABSTRACT

Since Spring 1969, Prince George's Community College (Maryland) has offered a team-taught, interdisciplinary course incorporating economics, geography, and political science in an introduction to social science for technical education students. As the course was originally designed, each of the instructors of the three disciplines was given a three-week period to present his/her material. Lectures were augmented by small group discussions which, during the last weeks of the semester, utilized role-playing in studying urban problems. The departure and replacement of two of the three instructors contributed to a course reorganization, utilizing a thematic approach, which resulted in a series of minicourses. Student response to this approach was very negative: complaints were registered about the enormous amount of material presented, the lack of continuity of the course, and the boring, poorly used textbook. In 1978, a new team took charge of the course and decided to: (1) combine all students in a large lecture class and provide for small discussion groups before exams; (2) reorganize the course content around interdisciplinary themes, beginning with an introduction to social science and proceeding to local, national, and international problems; and (3) write an original textbook which paralleled the lectures. Though students remained unenthusiastic about taking the course, their evaluations were more positive. (JP)

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TEAM TEACHING IN AN INTRODUCTORY COURSE TO SOCIAL SCIENCE

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TEAM TEACHING IN AN INTRODUCTORY COURSE TO SOCIAL SCIENCE

Abstract: In 1970 the Social Science Division of Prince George's Community College implimented an interdisciplinary course titled Introduction to Social Science. This course was developed around the disciplines of Economics, Geography, and Political Science. Instructional material was especially designed for those students enrolled in career and technical education curriculums. The initial group of teachers approached the project with enthusiasm; however, as problems arose, those instructors with limited competence quietly withdrew after one or two semesters experience. Those that remained tried valiantly to salvage something. As student criticism mounted, the administration gave three faculty members funds to develop instructional materials relevant to the particular needs of the course. What emerged was a personalized textbook that provided a stronger degree of cohesion that enabled the students to appreciate the interrelatedness of three diverse disciplines.

Introduction

In the Spring of 1969 several faculty members from various disciplines within the Division of Social Science began drafting course proposals that would integrate economics, political science, and geography in a course titled Introduction of Social Science. A proposal for a complementary course that would synthesize sociology, psychology and anthropology called Introduction to Behavioral Science was also developed. These two courses became part of the instructional program at Prince George's Community College in the Fall and Spring Semesters of 1969-70.

Over the past decade, the behavioral science course was deleted from the College's course offerings because there was only a limited endeavor

among the participating instructors to achieve a degree of cohesion between their respective disciplines. However, Introduction to Social Science has been successful although its success was not immediately apparent after the first five years of its existence.

To mandate an interdisciplinary course where three teachers regularly and purposefully share responsibilities for planning, presentation and evaluation prepared for the same group of students was easier to do than following it through until all of the pitfalls were eliminated. The premise of an interdisciplinary, team taught, course is that teachers can accomplish more by working together than by working alone. In addition to improving the utilization of staff and facilities, it is assumed that the blending of talents will improve instruction. This paper will discuss, in a historical as well as methodological context, the tribulations experienced by two instructors as they turned a learning situation which was floundering into a reasonably successful educational experience.

Rational for the Course

Social Science 100 was specifically designed to provide students enrolled in career and technical education curriculums with a maximum exposure to social science concepts within the context of their specific programs which limited the number of courses they could elect within the social science area. Under traditional circumstances a particular course is usually structured by individual instructors. Through the application of an interdisciplinary approach, Social Science 100 would provide a mode for increased receptivity and assimilation by the students of human phenomena as investigated by political scientists, geographers, and economists. It was apparent from the initial organizational meeting

that those teachers volunteering to participate in the course were generally enthusiastic towards the project. The goal of the team was to inculcate a pattern of interrelatedness which would provide a learning experience beneficial to both the student and teacher.

Initial Organization and Implimentation

In the development of subject material, the geographer and the political scientist found themselves to be quite compatible. The geographer structured his materials around urban themes which interacted well with governmental structure discussed by the political scientist. Nor was the economist left out; his lectures on money supply and inflation related to employment were relevant to what was being offered by his two colleagues.

The mode used to present the material was not a true interdisciplinarian approach. The initial week was used for organization and to give specific definitions for each of the three disciplines. After completing the introductory portion, each of the three instructors was given a three week period where he presented his material. During this three week session, the instructor met with the entire class on Monday and Wednesday. The Friday session was devoted to smaller class meetings. On Friday the class was subdivided into three groups and met in smaller classrooms with one of the three instructors. During these Friday sessions the instructor reviewed concepts and took pains to relate his discipline to material presented by his colleagues. These smaller sessions were critical becuase it was at this time that conceptual integration would occur.

Further assimilation would occur during the last four weeks of the course. The small sessions now met on a three day basis and participated in an urban simulation.[1] The game, Tracts, was designed to illustrate the role of planning and land use policies in a hypothetical community called Zenith City. Members of the class assumed one of the following four roles:

1) Urban Housing Development Sector
2) Industrial Sector
3) Planning Commission
4) Private Land Development Sector

Each of the above groups was independently involved in the planning and eventual use of sixteen city blocks just outside the business district. The game exposed the opportunities, arguments, and basis for actions regarding land where the land in question could not equally serve the interests of all land seeking parties without compromise and negotiation.

Upon the completion of the simulation, the three small groups were combined for the remaining two class meetings. The simulation was discussed by comparing the differing outcomes and there was a general review for the final exam which consisted of the usual multiple choice and essay questions.

Problems and Disappointments

Social Science 100 was a microcosm of Prince George's Community College. The range of student abilities was exceptionally wide. With

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[1] Tracts: An Urban Land Simulation (Newport, Minn: Instructional Simulations Inc., 1969).

such heterogeneous composition in the classroom there was a requirement for a teaching team skilled in desire and creativity. After the course's initial offering during the Spring Semester of 1970, there was cautious optimism among the teaching participants. Each of the three instructors had been granted a one course reduction in their teaching load; however, this was discontinued in the subsequent years. The administration had assumed that a one semester reduction in one's teaching load was all that was necessary in order to impliment the program. From the point of view of those participating teachers, it was evident that more released time was needed so that a true synthesis could emerge.

After the initial offering the team did not remain intact. The economist was the first to leave. As far as participating in a team taught experience, he was not competent. He was not a creative teacher and did not make a maximum effort to relate his materials to what his two other colleagues were teaching. Indeed, when he heard that the reduced teaching load was being rescinded, he was more than willing to leave. A year after the economist's departure, the political scientist followed. Here again was an individual that had little fortitude to resolve methodological problems that were beginning to surface. He, not too reluctantly, pawned his position onto a junior member of his department.

On the eve of the course's third year (Fall, 1971), two of the three original members of the team had departed. From the perception of this writer, their replacements were stronger teachers so the exchange of instructors was to the course's advantage. The "new" team developed a

thematic approach as a means towards the attainment of a cross discipline synthesis. The themes were as follows:

1) Technology and its Interaction with Man's Habitat
2) The Need for Equal Opportunity in Society
3) Social Control and the Needs of Society

In addition to developing a stronger thematic approach, there was a radical departure in carrying the material to the students. A circulating or revolving teacher technique was employed. The class was divided into three groups and remained stationary in small classrooms for the semester's duration. There were three four week sessions with each member of the team circulating amongst the three sections at the conclusion of each session. Dividing the class into individual section weakened the concept of integration. In reality, Social Science 100 had become a series of three minicourses. The labeling of the course as being interdisciplinary was deceptive.

Instead of resolving student complaints, the creation of minicourses only exacerbated them. From student responses to class evaluation forms, complaints focused on three critical problems:

1) Too much material presented in too little time;
2) Course lacked continuity and needed to be put together;
3) Textbook was too boring and was not fully used by all of the instructors.

After offering Social Science 100 in the format of three minicourses, teacher enthusiasm was vacillating. The initial pragmatism that prevailed in the year's beginning was gone. The economist cited the burden of three preparations, repetitiousness of the sessions, and the

brevity of the sessions did not allow for the development of a good rapport as she was accustomed to having with the students of her regular classes. The economist also felt that her material, although relevant and interesting, was too much for the alloted time. She cited the lack of a good textbook as also being a major obstacle. Written comments by students on class evaluation forms amplified these problems. For example, following is a comment from a student who gave the course a numerical rating of "very bad:"

> I believe this could be an interesting course if more time was allotted to grasp the material that is being presented. As it stands now I feel as if it is a waste of time and money because very little knowledge can be obtained. The instructors rush to cover planned material and I as a student have been confused from the beginning of the course and even up until now.[2]

Since Social Science 100 was specifically designed for students enrolled in various technical education programs, it became an imperative to develop material that would be related to what the student would encounter in his or her job experience. Emphasis should be placed on primary concepts rather than on social science methodology. Students in the course were not going to become geographers, economists or political scientists.

A New Team

In January 1974, a new team took over the responsibility for the direction and teaching of Social Science 100. This team brought to the course a determination to re-orient the tri-partite subject matter into a truly integrated offering. Certain decisions had to be made before

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[2]May 25, 1972

such integration could be achieved. The ideology behind the thinking of the team was that each instructor should teach every student that part of the course in which the instructor had particular expertise. In order to do this, the first and basic decision was that for most of the course all students would be combined in a large lecture class. Since there were three instructors and the school's maximum class size was pegged at 35, the maximum size of the lecture section would be 105.[3] Small discussion groups were provided immediately before each quiz or hour examination, with instructors rotating between the three groups. In order to further facilitate the learning process and to enable students to feel at ease with the wide scope of the course, the instructors developed study sheets for each testing experience, including thereon both concepts and essay questions for which the student would be held responsible.

The second major decision made by the new team was to re-organize the semester's offerings around certain themes, opening with a consideration of the meaning of social science and a discussion of the various disciplines involved in the course. The rationale here was both to familiarize the student with the vocabulary which would be essential to an understanding of subsequent discussion and lectures and to assuage his fears that he was undertaking the mastery of three separate disciplines in one three credit course.

It was suggested by the geographer on the team that the following

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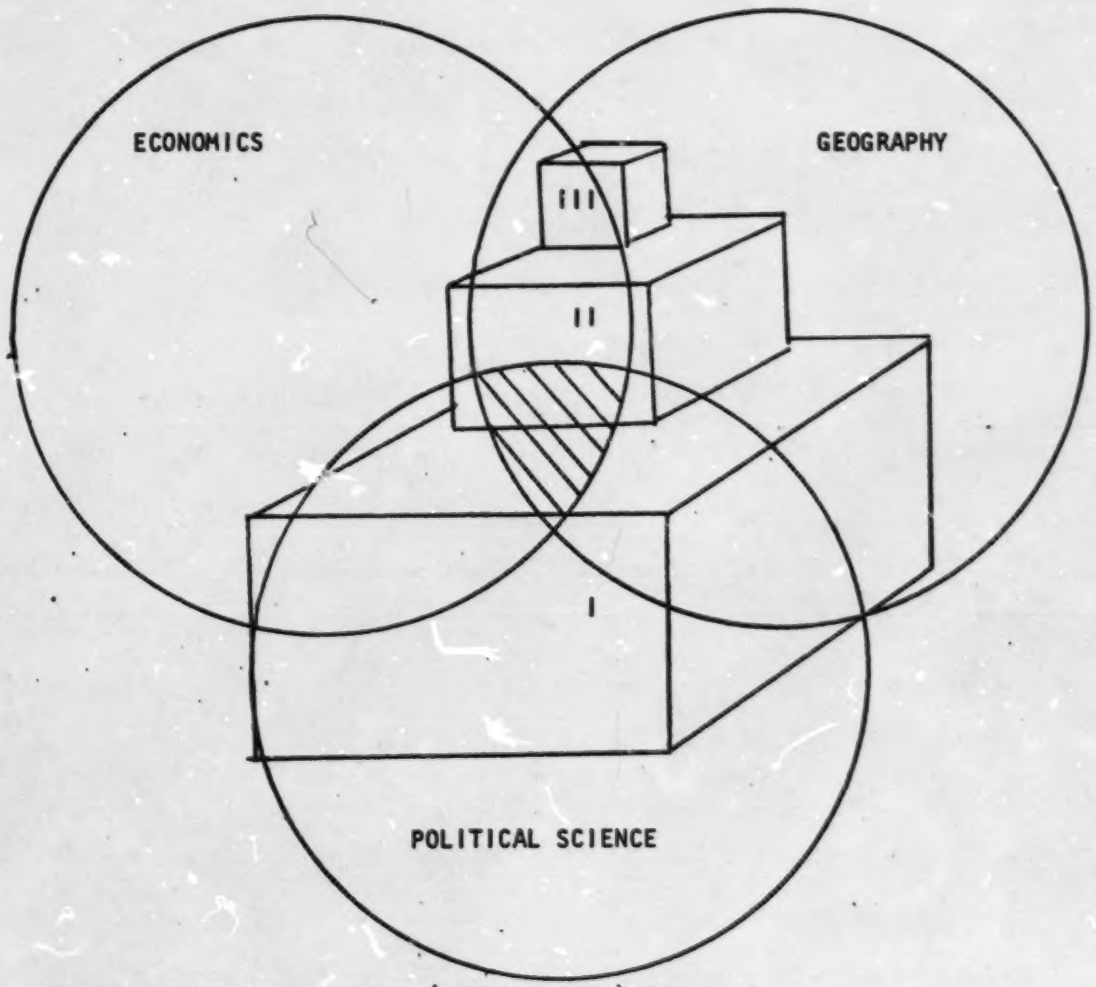
[3]Actually, the combined classes reached that total on only three occasions over the years, with the average running closer to 70 students.

third of the course be organized around a historical mode, starting with primitive man and his society, going through traditional society, to the medieval period and culminating with industrialization and the new technological society. Both the political scientist and the economist devised materials and lectures to fit this model. The last third of the course was devoted to a consideration of certain contemporary problems, among them, urbanization and crime. When a new economist came on to the team after just a semester, he was able to fit into the model already agreed upon, and the team continued in this fashion for another year.

Although students were not enthusiastic about taking the course, faculty evaluations showed that they are appreciative of the value of the course when they have had some experience with it and the course has traditionally enjoyed good student reaction. Students were dissatisfied, however, with the textbooks which were available for the course, and they expressed their dissatifaction quite openly to the administration. The college decided, therefore, in the summer of 1975 to allot funds to develop and publish materials in-house. A new geographer joined the team (He had been one of the original participants.) and the three instructors spent the summer reorganizing, revising, and developing materials peculiar to the new format. The college's one insistence was that these materials be able to be utilized by any instructor joining the team, so the materials were developed with this provision in mind.

The new format has been markedly successful. Students are pleased with the in-house text which parallels almost exactly the lectures offered in the course. The format itself is stimulating and timely. The team

STRUCTURAL MODEL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE 100



I. TOPICS DEALING WITH LOCAL (METROPOLITAN) PROBLEMS
II. TOPICS DEALING WITH NATIONAL PROBLEMS
III. TOPICS DEALING WITH INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS
\\\ INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THREE DISCIPLINES

Figure 1

decided to retain the initial three week segment on social science and the disciplines of geography, economics and political science. Thereafter, the model involves a spatial approach. In the belief that students would respond most readily to launching the course with the area that they were most familiar with, the course explores the metropolitan region first. Geographic, political and economic concepts and problems peculiarly important to the metropolitan area are developed with each instructor discussing his particular disciplinary interest--all organized around the thematic scheme previously outlined. The area of study expands gradually to include concepts and problems which are basically national in scope and then concludes with a relatively brief international segment.

Conclusion

To date, the new team still continues to employ the large lecture section, small discussion section methodology and with good success. The text is now somewhat outmoded and needs to be revised, but the college, acting under the financial constraints of a countywide TRIM initiative is unable to fund the revisions. The course, as a result, now stands on the threshhold of a new period. It is our conviction, reinforced by the opinions of our students, that the use of in-house materials peculiarly tailored to the outline of the course has been extremely successful. The number of students, while declining somewhat as a result of changes in requirements has been sufficient to justify the course as a continuing offering. The belief in the value of an integrated course for those

career students who will select only one social science course during their entire college career has been upheld by former students who have praised the course as having made them cognizant of their citizenship responsibilities and aware of contemporary problems.

APPENDIX

STUDENT EVALUATION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE 100, 1973 AND 1980

Do you find the material in the course interesting?

Dull		1	2	3	4	5		Interesting
	1973	10%	16%	25%	26%	23%	1973	
	1980	9%	13%	37%	25%	16%	1980	

Is the level of material in the course easier or more difficult than you expect in a college course?

Very Easy		1	2	3	4	5		Very Difficult
	1973	5%	9%	67%	14%	5%	1973	
	1980	3%	9%	60%	22%	6%	1980	

Are you satisfied with the continuity in the course as instructors change?

Satisfied		1	2	3	4	5		Unsatisfied
	1973	28%	10%	28%	17%	17%	1973	
	1980	31%	19%	25%	19%	6%	1980	

Are you satisfied with the content of the course as it is being taught?

Satisfied		1	2	3	4	5		Dissatisfied
	1973	19%	20%	26%	22%	13%	1973	
	1980	12%	28%	50%	7%	3%	1980	

Are you satisfied with the way the course is organized?

Satisfied		1	2	3	4	5		Dissatisfied
	1973	25%	17%	22%	17%	19%	1973	
	1980	29%	16%	29%	13%	13%	1980	

How valuable do you find the textbooks assigned in the course?

Very Good		1	2	3	4	5		Very Bad
	1973	2%	8%	25%	30%	35%	1973	
	1980	22%	34%	16%	16%	12%	1980	

Do you feel that you have profited more from this course or would have profited more from an introductory course in one of the disciplines covered?

More From This Course		1	2	3	4	5	More From Another Introductory Course
	1973	20%	10%	19%	18%	33%	1973
	1980	22%	19%	34%	19%	6%	1980

APPENDIX II

COURSE CONTENT

I. Introduction to Social Science as an Interdisciplinary course

- A. What is Social Science?
- B. Basic definitions and themes of Geography
- C. Political Science, the study of power and authority
- D. Introduction to Economics for Social Science

II. The Metropolitan Area

- A. Urban location and Central Place Theory
- B. Growth of American cities through time
- C. The metropolis: A Political Scientist's view
- D. Geographical aspects of an urban system
  1. The small town
  2. The city
  3. The suburb
  4. The new town
- E. Metropolitan problems
  1. An economic viewpoint of discrimination and poverty
  2. A political viewpoint of discrimination and poverty
  3. Cost-benefit analysis and externalities
  4. The economics of crime
  5. A political analysis of crime
  6. The economics of health care
  7. Government and health care

III. National Affairs

- A. American government today, history and setting
- B. Technological change and the American frontier
- C. National problems
  1. Economic aspects of the ecological crisis
  2. Ecology and public policy
  3. Unemployment, inflation, fiscal and monetary policies

IV. The International View

- A. History of developing governments
- B. Geographic dimensions of the nation state
- C. Comparative economic systems
- D. Modern political theories

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